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Correspondence.

ITALY IN 1855-1856.

ROME, 6th February, 1856;—Rome possesses comparatively few works of those two centuries, the 14th and 15th, when modern art exhibited its purest power, and reached a point of spiritual elevation, which was soon lost and which has never since been re-attained. The decline that commenced with the sixteenth century is stamped upon the face of the city. Raphael and Michael Angelo were the forerunners of decay, and their works and those of the host of their unworthy followers, are the works which give one of its most prevailing characteristics to Rome of the present day, and predominate over all others. The spirit of the earlier artists was incongruous with the worldly pomp and selfish display of the capital of the popes, but Michael Angelo's genius gave just expression to the character of the papacy in its period of greatest splendor, and Bernini is the fit representative of its weakness and decline. The eye is wearied and discouraged by the constant repetition of monuments of art, which, the more skillful and elaborate they may be, only the more exhibit the absence of noble design and elevated thought. It is in vain to seek among them for that excellence which is at once the result and the source of the integrity of purpose and the purity of affection which makes art the teacher of divine truth and unites it indissolubly with pure religion. The spirit of Christianity is invisible. Change the attributes with which they are accompanied, and the host of sculptured and painted angels, prophets and martyrs of these later centuries might stand for heaven images, or figures of the lowest earthly characters. Simplicity is banished, and modesty proscribed. Instead of being the minister of the heavenly truth, the consoler of sorrow, the purifier of affections, the revealer of the beauty of God visible in his world, art was degraded into the servant of human ambition, the attendant of luxury and pomp, and the slave of falsehood and caprice.

The power of appreciating what was good was necessarily lost with the desire for and love of it, and the results of the last two centuries and a half in Rome are hardly more melancholy in what they have produced than in what they have destroyed. Works of such men as Giotto, Fra Angelico, Perugino, and Sodoma have been effaced to make room for others worse than worthless; and even now the current of improved taste and feeling is not so strong as to save from the profanation of so-called restorers many most precious relics of the past. The example of destruction was set in Raphael's time, and whatever may be the estimate in which his Stanze are held, it is not to be forgotten that pictures by Perugino and Signorelli were obliterated to make room for them.

Amidst this general wreck, a few of the earlier works have escaped, and from the ambitious effort and emptiness of the degenerate schools, it is a relief and delight to find here and there a specimen of the labors of those masters who regarded their art as a sacred calling, and worked not for the sake of applause or gain, but for the

love and in the fear of God. The most precious of all these is, perhaps, the little chapel of Nicholas V., in the Vatican, whose walls are covered with a series of frescoes by Fra Angelico, illustrating the stories of St. Stephen and St. Lawrence. This chapel is said to be the oldest part of the present Vatican, and its preservation seems to have been more owing to accident than to any recognition of the beauty which it contained. For more than a hundred years the key to it was lost, and its door was unopened. Few, except the readers of Vasari knew that such a chapel had existed, and as late as the middle of the last century the still smaller number of those who desired to see the frescoes were obliged to scramble in through the single window over the high altar. Another chapel at the Vatican was painted by Fra Angelico, with scenes from the life of Christ; "an excellent work in his manner," says Vasari, and one of whose merit we may judge, not only by that of the pictures in the chapel of Nicholas V., but also by our knowledge of the manner in which this most Christian painter was accustomed to treat the subjects that he drew from the life of his master. But this second chapel was destroyed less than a hundred years after it had been painted, by one of the Popes (Paul III.), who desired to straighten a staircase that ran by its side. It is fortunate that no crooked stairs passed by that of Nicholas V.

It was in the year 1446, that Fra Angelico was called by the Pope from his convent at Fiesole to paint at Rome. He was already an old man, for he was born in 1387. He had painted in Foligno and in Cortona, but his principal works were in Florence, and from there his fame had spread over Italy. His life had not been marked by great events, and among the biographies of artists there are few of less interest from their incidents, or of more interest from the character displayed in them, than his. Vasari, usually little appreciative of the nature and value of the moral relations and the religious bearing of art, is touched into enthusiasm in writing of this pure and holy man. Contemporary prejudices and prepossessions are forgotten, and the biographer partakes for the time of the spirit of the artist. "Such superior and extraordinary talent," he says, "as was that of Fra Giovanni, cannot and ought not to belong to any but a man of most holy life; for those who employ themselves on religious and holy subjects ought to be religious and holy men." He was simple in his modes of life, and a great friend of the poor. He might have been rich had he cared to be so, but he used to say that true riches was in being content with little. He said that he who employed himself in art had need of quiet and of living free from cares, and that he who would represent Christ should always live with Christ. "He was never seen angry with any of the brothers of the convent, which seems to me," says the honest Vasari, "a very great thing, and one almost impossible to believe. In fine, this never-sufficiently-to-be-praised father was most humble and modest in all his works and discourse, and in his pictures easy and devout: and the saints that he painted have more the air and likeness of saints, than those of any one else. It was his custom

never to retouch or repair his painting, but to leave it always as it first came, believing as he said so was the will of God. Some say that Fra Giovanni would never put his hand to his brush before he had made a prayer. He never painted a crucifix but tears bathed his cheeks, and thus in the looks and attitudes of his figures is seen the goodness of his sincere and great soul in the Christian religion."

No artist ever more completely painted his own character in his works, than Fra Angelico. The simplicity, the purity, and the spirituality of his life are visible in them all. No angels of other artists seem angelic when compared with his, and the happy name by which he is known is at once expressive of his own virtues, and of the pre-eminence of his conceptions of the heavenly host. Many faults of drawing, many limitations of technical skill, many of what in strict language are to be called *artistic* defects, are visible in his pictures; but these defects were common to all artists of the age; and it is to be remembered that even in artistic qualities he rises superior to all others of his time, while the spirit which pervades his works is such as to give a charm to their very deficiencies, and the stiffness of Fra Angelico is not only pardoned but loved for the beauty that lies behind it.

The chapel of Nicholas V. is very small, and its ceiling and walls are wholly covered with his paintings. Most of them, though faded, are well preserved, but a few have been ruined by dampness, and some of the others have suffered at the hands of restorers. The ceiling is colored of a deep sky-blue, pointed over with golden stars. In the four compartments into which it is divided are the four Evangelists. In the corners of the chapel are the eight doctors of the Church; two in each corner, one above the other.*

On the walls are represented in six compartments the principal events of the lives of St. Stephen and St. Lawrence, so arranged that the correspondences in their histories may distinctly appear. These two saints have long been associated together in the legends of the Church. Their bodies lie in the same tomb under the high altar of the venerable basilica of St. Lawrence, outside the walls, one of the most interesting churches in Rome, from its antiquity, the beauty and solitude of its position, standing lonely on the edge of the Campagna, and from its air of undisturbed quiet and tranquil decay. It is said that when the relics of St. Stephen were lowered into the tomb, the bones of St. Lawrence moved to make room for them.

The most beautiful of these works of Fra Angelico—of which all are beautiful—are, perhaps, the preaching of St. Stephen, and the distribution of alms by St. Lawrence. In the first the saint stands upon a step, robed in a deacon's dress. Before him sit many women upon the ground, listening to his words. Behind these women stand "certain of the synagogue," laying plots against him. The background is occupied with the buildings of Jerusalem. The simplicity of the arrangement of the group of

* They are Saint John Chrysostom and St. Bonaventura (or St. Jerome), St. Gregory, St. Augustine, St. Athanasius, and St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Ambrose and St. Leo.

women is entire; their attitudes are full of nature, of dignity, and of grace; their expressions are of earnest attention, and their sweet, thoughtful, and serious faces "looking steadfastly on him, see his face as though it were the face of an angel." The painter was too impressed with the reality of what he desired to represent, to strive after those varieties of composition which, while showing his skill, would have interfered with the needed expression. The only collateral incident that he introduces is the representing a little child seated by his mother, who holds his hand. There is nothing to remind one of the painter—St. Stephen and his audience are all that the picture brings before the mind.

In the distribution of alms by St. Lawrence the subject is not less simply and nobly treated. The saint stands in the centre of the picture, surrounded by the poor, blind and lame. His face has a deep serenity of expression, as if his heart were filled with the foreknowledge of that horrible but triumphant death which awaited on the next day. His dress is of the richest color, and ornamented with symbolic flames of gold. Two little children, with their arms about each other, are at his side, just turning away with the gift they have received from him. A blind man is feeling forward with his staff. A poor cripple is stretching up his hand for the alms which the saint holds out. A woman approaches with her baby in her arms. Two old people draw near on the other side. All the figures are instinct with truth and life. It is like a real scene, and the benign spirit of charity gives it a celestial glory.*

In the pictures of the martyrdoms of the two saints it is curious to observe how the mild pencil of Fra Angelico has refused to represent the vileness of the executioners. He could not paint wickedness, and the bad themselves are saved from the hatred that is due to them by that sublime weakness which was unable to imagine evil. This chapel is one of the holy places of Rome.

Fra Angelico never returned to his well-beloved convents in Florence and in Fiesole. He painted other works in Rome, and for some months he labored in that great storehouse of the best art, the duomo of Orvieto. He died at Rome on the 18th March, 1455. He was buried in the church of Maria Sopra Minerva, and the pope, Nicholas V., who had held him in just esteem, caused a monumental slab, upon which his effigy was sculptured, to be erected to his memory.

This monument still remains in the chapel at the left of the choir of this splendid church. The artist is represented in the dress of his order, his head resting upon a pillow and his hands folded. The face seems to have been taken from a mask, made after death. The closed eyes are deep set, and the cheeks hollow, as if sunk with age and disease. The features are small and delicate, and marked with an air of grave repose. The lower part of the monument is worn by the passing by of the gene-

rations that have stood and knelt at its side. The inscription under the figure is as follows:

HIC JACET VENI PICTO. FR., JO. DE FLÓ., ORDINIS PREDICAT.,
145V.

NON MIHI SIT LAUDI QUOD ERAM VELUT ALTER APOLLON, M
SED QUOD LUCRA TUIS OMNIA CHRISTE DABAM: CCCC
ALTERA NAM TERRIS OPERA EXTANT ALTERA CÆLO. L
URBS ME JOANNEM FLOS TULIT ETRURIE. I V

Here lies the venerable painter, Brother John of Florence, of the Order of the Preachers, 1455.

Not mine be the praise that I was as a second Apelles, But that I gave all my gains to thine, O Christ. One work is for the earth, another for heaven. The city, the flower of Tuscany, bore me—John.

Before this tomb the Christian and the artist may bow as before that of a true saint. This is another of the holy places of Rome.

February, 1856.—It is a custom here, that when a house is completed, all those who have been engaged in building it, should have a little celebration together. I met last night an architect well known here, a man of education and intelligence. A year or so ago, he was at a meeting of this sort, to celebrate the completion of a building, the erection of which he had overseen. In the midst of the proceedings the police suddenly broke in, arrested the architect and several others of the company. He was thrown into prison, and this is in itself a severe punishment in Rome owing to the ill condition and bad management of the prisons; he was not informed of the nature of the charge against him; for three months he was in confinement; he was then brought before one of the courts, and learned that he was charged with having taken part in a seditious meeting. He was able to prove that the meeting was simply of the kind described; that he and the workmen with whom he had been associated were infringing on no political reserves, and he was ordered to be discharged, but to remain for some months under the surveillance of the police. He received no apology or compensation, and he had no means of redress. The authorities took no account of the interruption of his social relations, or the injury to his business. It would be dangerous for him were he to complain, and no good could come of it, even the story must be told under one's breath. I heard it last night in a drawing-room, where Tullio Ramaciotti was delighting the company with the music of his wonderful violin. Under a despotism, the musician has a happy lot. No spy can detect the sedition that may lie within the compass of his instrument; and he may breathe out the longings of his soul for freedom in notes, the secret meaning of which no police agent can suspect. The Italian loves that music which expresses those passions, the expression of which he may indulge in no other way. It is for this reason that Verdi is now the favorite master over all Italy; and it is not only because the librettos of some of his operas were too liberal, but because the music itself was instinct with the wild and vague liberalism of the time, that their performance has now and then been forbidden by suspicious authorities. But when the singers could no longer sing them, the organists began to play them in the churches.

February, 1856.—Since the time of the later republic, Rome has been rather the

nurse than the mother of great men. She has, however, so treated her foster sons, that for the most part they have loved and served her like her own children. Few of the great Latin authors, whose fame belongs to Rome, were Romans by birth; and in modern times, none of the greatest poets or prose writers of Italy have been born here. Metastasio is the poet whom the Romans love as their own; but what is he by the side of the masters of Italian song?† Of all the great artists who have done so much for Rome, not one was Roman except by adoption. Rome has understood how to make genius tributary to herself, and at the same time has given to many an artist occasion to say with Vasari, "Questa Roma è una buona Roma per me" (this Rome is a good Rome for me). But the good reception that Rome has offered to men of genius has not been without danger to them. The decline of artists after coming to Rome, is a fact open to be remarked, and the injurious effect of Roman influences upon Art has not yet been studied, and exhibited as it deserves. There has been something in the air unfavorable to genius.

Most of the greatest popes also have been foreign by birth to Rome. Gregory VIII. was born in Tuscany; Leo X. at Florence; Sixtus V. at Grotta-a-mare; and these few names will answer for examples of what seems almost like a rule. San Filippo Neri, too, the "Apollo of Rome," the friend and fellow-laborer of San Carlo Borromeo, was a Florentine by birth, though a Roman by life.

While Rome is ruled by bigots, the exercise of reason being proscribed, and liberty being prohibited, she will have to continue to import her great men.

19th February, 1856.—There is very little good church music to be heard in Rome. The famous school of Roman composers of sacred music has long since passed, and we may enter church after church in vain in search for music appropriate to solemn religious services. The organists complain that such music is not popular, and try to suit the popular taste by the adaptation of operatic airs to sacred words. At St. Peter's, on days of great ceremony, there is now and then a burst of fine music from the choir, unaccompanied by any instrument, and in the Sistine chapel one may a few times in the year hear a mass or a miserere of Palestrina's sung by the papal choir. Every Sunday evening, and on the evenings of feast days, there is music at the benediction in the church of the Trinità de Monti, sung by the nuns of the convent. It is very sweet and touching, for the voices of the nuns have a sound of purity and earnestness which is not to be found in those of the hired choirs of male singers, common in the churches. But it has be-

* The list of Romans not Roman is a curious one, and might be made very long. Cicero was born at Arpinum; Virgil, near Mantua; Horace, at Venusia; Ovid, at Sulmo; Livy, at Padua; Pliny and Catullus, at Verona; Juvenal, at Aquinum; Terence, at Carthage; and so Sallust; Martial, Phædrus, Propertius, Plautus, Seneca, Quintilian, were all born away from Rome.

† Poor Metastasio, "nostro caro," as the Romans call him now, found little recognition in Rome while he lived. The last forty years of his life he spent at Vienna.

* Small outlines from these two pictures are to be found in the last edition of the English translation of Kugler's Handbook of Painting; and the Arundel Society are doing a good work in publishing a complete series of outlines on a large scale of the frescoes in this chapel.

come a fashion among strangers in Rome to attend this service, and on Sunday afternoons the steps of the church are occupied by a crowd of English and Americans; and when the door is opened, there is a general rush and a scramble for seats; so that the quiet of the place is disturbed, and those who have come from mere fashion or curiosity, force upon the service a theatric appearance, little in conformity with its real character, with the sentiment that belongs to it, or with the solemnity of worship.

The organist of St. Peter's, now and then, during Lent, gives a concert of sacred music, under the patronage "of the strangers in Rome," at which some of the most beautiful of the ancient music is produced. Poor Rome! It is curious and sad to see how almost in every direction she has fallen from her old standard. This music has a character exclusively its own, which distinguishes it from all other. It is such music as Saint Cecilia and her attendant angels might have sung together; so pure, so clear, so heavenly in its tones, so overpoweringly pathetic in its sadness, so unspeakably exultant in its joy. In listening to one of Palestrina's masses one understands and feels the truth of the story that is told of the effect of his great "mass of Pope Marcellus." In the papacy of Pius IV, in the middle of the 16th century, when church music had fallen into decay, and had become secular, as in our time, the Pope appointed a commission to determine whether music should be any longer permitted in the churches. The Pope was a Milanese, and had nominated the good archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo, as the head of the commission. The archbishop was a man of strict and severe life, with almost a Puritan horror of the vanities of the world. He was likely to decide against the art which had been profaned to worldly service. But happily Palestrina was living; he wrote a mass, which was performed before the pope and the archbishop, and by its power the question was solved, and the sacredness of music as a divine art approved even to the judgment of indifferent and hostile men. Palestrina is buried in St. Peter's—the only man besides popes and princes who has a grave in that great church. This is a finer piece of poetic propriety than is often met with in these Roman churches, where too frequently all appropriate associations are interfered with, and all high imaginations lowered by the spirit of worldly display, the dull ill-taste, and the want of feeling that pervade them.

"Can good fruit, architectural or other," writes a friend to me, "come from a bad tree, and is not the architecture of modern Rome a true exponent of the minds, intellectual at times, but heartless always, which produced it? Note one fact among many: there is hardly a church in Rome which has not a sham front much higher than the real building within."

February 24th, 1856.—Our countryman, William Page, has been living in Rome for some time past, and his studio, in the Via Margutta, contains some of those works that he has recently been engaged upon. We have heard in America, from time to time, of the preëminence of his portraits,

and special mention has been made of those of Mrs. Crawford, Mr. Browning, and Miss Cushman. But we have not heard enough of these portraits, and in general we have heard far too little of his original works—works which centuries hence will be as famous as they are to-day little known. Page's rank as a portrait painter, is side by side with the greatest masters of the art. His likenesses are not only precious works of art, but they have a psychological value, such as makes the portraits by Titian portraits not only of the outward appearance, but of the realities of character; not always, indeed, of the actual attainments of character, but often of those truths that lie in shadow never, perhaps, to be brought into the light of action, and of the possibilities existing within the soul, more or less revealed in the usual countenance and the daily life. The great portrait painter must be not only a student of Art, but a student of human nature; and thus very few of the most famous painters of portraits have succeeded in taking good likenesses. A man might esteem himself lucky who lived in Titian's time, and could get the great master to transmit to posterity his image upon canvas, for the painter could not but transfer something of his own greatness even to the smallest subject. Look, on the contrary, and see how Sir Thomas Lawrence's fashionable portraits are becoming day by day caricatures of the generation that he painted as severe as any that Gillray ever drew. In our time, and for our country, it is a happy thing that there should be a portrait painter, whose pictures will not only be a sacred domestic treasure for the generation for whom they are painted; growing in their eyes every day more full of tender association and meaning; but which will be also a precious heirloom to the children and grandchildren and great grandchildren of those living to-day. For before these pictures little children will gather in years long to come to see how their grandmother's father or mother used to look, and to learn something of the beauty of that long past time, and to listen to some lesson that may reach their hearts from those still but expressive eyes, from those silent but yet speaking lips. A great portrait painter is the friend not only of his own, but of future time. What would we not give for such a likeness as Page could take of those whose image has gone from earth, but the remembrance of whom will live in the heart till death changes remembrances of the old heaven, when they were with us, into the new heaven in which we meet again!

No description of Page's manner or method would convey, except to one acquainted with the use of technical terms, an impression of the excellence of his works. It is because their chief characteristic is their truth to nature, that his pictures are so fine. In color he is unsurpassed, and the flesh of his portraits has no "painty" quality; but seems the veritable image of the thing which it represents. One cannot study any of his pictures without seeing that it is the work of a thoughtful, spiritually-minded man, a thorough and reverent artist. The gifts which Nature bestowed have been cultivated by long and studious application; and each new picture of his is likely to be better than

those that have preceded it, because neither his zeal nor his humility have slackened with his success.

A large original picture, upon which he has been employed for two years, is now nearly finished. It represents Venus just rising from the sea. She stands upon the head of a dolphin in the midst of the waves. It is the dawn, and the goddess is alone in the first flush and glow of conscious life. Her long golden hair falls around her, and seems hardly yet to have felt the touch of the morning wind. All around is the dark greenish-blue sea, stretching far off to the horizon, where the first cloud of the dawn coming up on the clear sky, foretells the expected day. The foremost waves are full of motion and play, and their dark, hollow depths are touched with the breaks and dashes of the uncertain and changing light. The sentiment of the picture is complete. In all artistic points it is superb; and it will be a loss to America that can hardly be made good should it be purchased for any other country.

Another picture upon which Page is engaged is the "Visitation." The composition is simple, and full of dignity, and the picture promises to be of the highest beauty.*

It is difficult to speak of such works as these in cool and critical terms. By the side of the works of the great masters of past times, here in Italy, they take an even place. Page's fame is a possession of which any people might well be proud, and of which we shall be proud hereafter. The fact that so great an artist is living, and is one of our countrymen, is one to be known and rejoiced in by us all.

Rome, February 22d, 1856.—The condition of public affairs here is thoroughly disheartening. No state could be more rotten, and retain its vitality. The government is in the hands of three classes: bigots, knaves, and fools. There are among an immense number of men whose principle is comprised in the axiom of "après nous le déluge;" men without religion, without probity, without patriotism, but with power. It is easy to write against them. But facts are stronger than words. Here is one belonging to to-day. Some time since the government imposed a tax upon the exercise of professions. All who exercised a trade or profession were called upon to pay a certain annual sum. This sum was not regulated according to the gains coming to each person from his profession, but the advocate with the least business was to pay as much as the advocate with the most, and the architect who erected two houses in a year as much as he who erected twenty. The whole scheme was a mass of equal injustice and folly. For instance, a seller of lemons in the squares was to pay sixty dollars a year for his trade—a tax utterly intolerable.

So much resistance was made to the collection of this tax, not merely in the city, but in the country also, that government

* This picture has happily been secured for America by one of our fellow-countrymen. One such picture is worth a whole gallery of the "old masters." Is there no rich man who loves the arts enough, and who is patriotic enough (for to get such a picture is to get a permanent treasure for the country), to order the "Venus" to be sent to America?

was forced to withdraw it. A second time the law enacting such a tax, somewhat modified, was promulgated; no attempt was made to enforce it. The enactment, still further modified, but based on the same obnoxious principle, has again appeared, and yesterday an attempt was made to collect the tax. How general the collection was I have not yet learned. My informant refused to pay what was demanded of him, wishing to take counsel with others as to the course that should be pursued. The government is too weak to enforce the tax in the face of a general resistance.

No employé of government pays taxes.

This year some of the annual taxes were laid for fourteen instead of twelve months. A piece of absurd chicanery. The government did not wish nominally to increase the tax, and therefore ordered that the year should be considered as containing fourteen months, and the tax be reckoned by months, and paid accordingly.

Corruption rules supreme. It is acknowledged and permitted by the highest authorities. Many officials receive a salary so small, as to be utterly insufficient for their support; they are told to depend for their livelihood on the "incerti" of their office; that is on fees, whose very name shows that they are regulated by no fixed scale, but depend on the ingenuity and the impudence of him who demands them.

Both justice and injustice are for sale; and the first price asked for either is often much less than will be finally accepted; as is the case with that asked for most articles in Rome.

One of the most amusing instances of petty and corrupt tyranny is that exercised by the servants of men in authority. These servants, coming from the very dregs of the people, with all the pretensions of full-blooded flunkies, and with all the dirt of a friar, keep a list of the persons who visit or have business with their masters; and twice a year, at midsummer and at the beginning of the year, call at houses of these their master's acquaintance, and demand a "mancia," a "gift," or a "fee," for their services. If it is refused they have a thousand ways of exacting their vengeance. Their master is not in when he who does not give the "mancia" calls. Notes to him are mislaid; and all the petty vexations that the malice of servants can suggest are well worked out. To one whose social relations are extensive, the "mancia" is a serious tax. From three to five pauls (thirty to fifty cents) is a common sum to be given. It is plain how soon this would score up to a considerable amount.

The saddest aspect of things here arises, however, not from the weak tyranny of the government, nor from the corruption of officials, but from the character and condition of the people themselves. Society is divided into two great classes;—that of those whose interests are to keep things as they are; and that of those who would change or overthrow the existing conditions, in the belief that change must be improvement. The first of these classes is a small minority; but united by discipline, by education, and by faith, and holding power, money, and troops in their hands. The other is made up of nine-tenths of the Romans, but

without organization, without confidence in each other, without intimate knowledge of each other, and with principles so diverse on many points as to desire completely different courses of action. Distrust is the one prevailing element in society. No one confides in the one who stands next to him. Hypocrisy is the rule not only of Jesuits, but of those who have been governed by Jesuits.

Meanwhile, moderate and thoughtful men live and suffer. Their daily lives are a daily struggle. To die would be a happiness if by their deaths any good could be accomplished for Rome; but to offer themselves as sacrifices in a cause where the devotion of a single life would seem like attempting to force a flood back with the hands, would be the exhibition not of heroism, but of impatience and of faithlessness. "But it is better not to talk of these things," said an Italian in talking with me; "for these are the things that leave a bitterness in the heart." All is darkness, and the wisest men are groping for light, not knowing in which direction it lies. But perhaps the first glimmer of a new dawn may even at this black moment be springing fast forward soon to break the blankness of the sky. God deserts not the world. Trial, sorrow, and suffering are the forerunners of justice, liberty, and truth.

"I watch the circle of the eternal years,
And read for ever in the storied page
One lengthened roll of blood, and wrong, and tears,
One onward step of Truth from age to age.

The poor are crushed: the tyrants link their chain:
The poet sings through narrow dungeon grates:
Man's hope lies quenched; and lo! with steadfast
gait,
Freedom doth forge her mail of adverse fates."

ART NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

LETTER XV.

To the Editors of the Crayon:

LONDON, 20th May, 1856.

THE artistic event of this month is the artistic event of the year—the opening of the Royal Academy Exhibition. It is a cheering sight for pre-Raphaelites; and I should hope for the public, whom these have leavened. Pre-Raphaelitism may now be said to have pretty well won the day. It has its recognized champions—men tolerably strong in themselves; it rallies to itself almost every new-comer having a gleam of originality or power; it compels reluctant painters, who had achieved ringing reputations before pre-Raphaelitism was a name known among men, to confess its influence, more or less, in their own doings; in fine, its mark is everywhere, and it may be said to have changed the whole face of the Exhibition. I need scarcely add that, this being the state of the case, I rate the year's collection very high, at the same time, the merit is chiefly a merit of diffusion, and of more earnest purpose and thought throughout; the works of leading men, which rank very prominently among the respective authors' own performances, being comparatively few.

Last month I spoke of the contributions of the chief pre-Raphaelite exhibitors; and I shall now pick out for specification a few others of note. The names I mention will not be always those

of the men likely to be best known in America; but they are names which, where not distinguished already, ought to be and, I hope, in time will be.

STANFIELD, *The Abandoned*. A wreck drifting in the utter desolation of mid ocean: powerful and impressive, without any violent effect. LEWIS, *The Greeting in the Desert, Egypt*; and *Street Scene in Cairo*. Two lovely and wonderful pieces, of refined perception and execution. W. L. WINDUS, *Burd Helen* (from an old Scottish ballad): *Helen, fearing the desertion of her lover, runs by the side of his horse as his foot-pager*. A most touching and fascinating *chef d'œuvre* of the new school; full of pathos, dramatic sincerity, and intense study. FRITH, *Many Happy Returns of the Day*. An elegant and pretty domestic scene—the birthday festival of a little girl. SIR J. W. GORDON, *Mr. David Cox*. The subscription-portrait, of which I have more than once spoken; an excellent likeness, finely painted. LANDSEER, *Highland Nurses*. Two does licking the wounds of a dying deer. Most lovely and affecting in sentiment, and in all respects a masterpiece. I am told that the incident was witnessed by Sir Edwin in the case of a deer which he had himself shot. A. J. HERBERT, *Philip IV., of Spain, knighting Velasquez*. A work of both achievement and promise, painted throughout with manly good sense. This artist is the son of Mr. Herbert, the well-known academician. INCHBOLD, *Mid-Spring*. A delicious landscape, almost untraceable in its minuteness of observation and rendering. The season is indicated by one of its most enchanting sights—a forest bank in dewy morning, massed with countless blooms of the wild hyacinth. H. WALLIS, *Chatterton*—lying dead in his garret, self-poisoned, after tearing up his manuscripts: another of the New School, and of really high art; imagined and expressed with entire faithfulness. W. DAVIS, *Shotwick on the Dee*, and *Wallsey Mill, Cheshire*. Two small, twilight landscapes, beautifully true and dim; I recollect having spoken of a picture of Mr. Davis's last year; and these confirm the high conception I then formed of his powers. BURTON, *The Cavalier and Puritan*. A cavalier, mortally wounded in a duel, is discovered in the forest by a Puritan lady. This picture, full of the more obvious qualities of pre-Raphaelitism, and almost the first work of its author, has excited a great sensation, and is about as talented in its line as it can well be; but that line is not a line of growth. LEIGHTON, *The Triumph of Music*. This is the artist whose Cimabue picture of last year made him an immediate reputation. Here he has got a magnificent subject—Orpheus redeeming his wife from hell by the power of his viol; and he has treated it with glimpses of original strength and mind, which quite maintain him—to my thinking—at his former level—so far as capacity goes; but, as art, the work is wholly a failure. HOOK, *The Fisherman's Good Night*. The best of various beautiful landscape subjects by this most genial painter, with a beautiful depth of grey-shadowed green sea. A. HUGHES, *April Love*, and *The Eve of St. Agnes*. I think I made some allusions to these last month in connection with Hunt's and Millais's pictures. The "Eve of St. Agnes," now that I see it

completed in effect, strikes me as being, after Millais' "Autumn Leaves," the most lovely piece of highly-wrought color-effect in the exhibition. ARMITAGE, *The Bottom of the Ravine at Invermann—*from a sketch taken at the spot four months after the battle. A very powerful crayon-drawing, more powerful than the scene could ever be got up by "invention." Crocuses are starring the dreadful ground at every step, and actually shooting up between the stiff fingers of a soldier's corpse. ANTHONY, *Summer's Eve*. A picture small for this daring artist, full of soft, bright changes of color. WOOLNER, *Love* (small figure in marble). Perhaps the most finished and perfect work of sculpture, as an expression simply of the feeling for the beautiful, which I have seen from an Englishman for some while.

I mentioned in my last letter that a portrait of the poet Robert Browning, by your countryman, Page, had been sent to the Academy Exhibition. I added a qualifying clause as to the sublime uncertainty which attends such transactions, and this proves to be a case in point: the portrait is not hung. Another American artist, Mr. Peele, has a picture named "The Music of the Reeds—Portrait of Eloise d'Herbil, the celebrated Spanish pianist." In connection with Mr. Page's non-appearance, I may observe, that the room known to academicians as the Octagon Room, and to outsiders as the "condemned cell," is closed this year to pictures, and converted into a price-room for consultation by intending purchasers. Certainly, for purposes of exhibition, it was the wretchedest hole that could easily be imagined; and the academicians got so much bullied about it annually, that one cannot be surprised at the course they have adopted: still, while numbers of good pictures are rejected every year, it seems to me more than doubtful policy to curtail any available space, and I could name other works which have been declined, with no valid ground as far as their own deservings are concerned. However, the hanging of contributions, always a subject of complaint and soreness, is undoubtedly, on the whole, much less open to censure this year than usual.

Your readers are aware that there was a pamphlet last year from Ruskin on the Academy Exhibition, and this year there is a second, of which edition rapidly succeeds edition, though it was first published only on the 10th of this month. All are anxious to know what Ruskin says about the pictures, and most people are hot to dispute his verdicts. The first pamphlet excited ill blood by the gallon, because of the occasional strictures it contained,—expressed, indeed, with measure and on just grounds; but still with a sting in them which no man knows better than Ruskin how to make felt: the second pamphlet will offend scarcely any one in the same direct manner, for it mentions, as a general rule only such pictures as it can praise. However, people don't take to it much more kindly than to its predecessor; and, indeed, Ruskin is now, and for some while has been, at that stage of the contest with the powers of authority, precedent, and prejudice, where every man's hand is against him, and no course which he could possibly adopt would heal old sores, or conciliate opponents. Of course, his immense

influence with thinkers, the new generation, and even the herd of general readers, is a chief cause of this animosity, and continues notwithstanding. To me the objection which appears valid against the new pamphlet is, that it exhibits Ruskin as too ready to be pleased, and sometimes as led by sympathy with a subject, or by a preconception, to discover merits in a work which only exist in his notion of what the work would be if really carried out. No one feels more than I do how slow one should be to suppose that a man like Ruskin, with his almost unbounded knowledge of natural truth, and his deep feeling, should be mistaken in a deliberately expressed judgment, however much it may clash with my own: still, there are cases in the new pamphlet where my perceptions, and those of persons upon whom I can rely, are so entirely at variance with his that to defer to him, would be to deny one's own individuality; and I am apprehensive that, among admirers who refuse to be led blindfold even by a Ruskin, many will find themselves so much bewildered, that the authority of his judgment in one instance must suffer from its disputableness in another. In fact, the tone of his praises throughout the essay appears to me pitched in too high a key; and, if I may say so, without audacity, with too little relative discrimination. He has himself, it may be added, been recently the subject of two fierce onslaughts, which have been much sifted in artistic circles—one in the *Edinburgh Review*, the other in the *Quarterly*. The first proposes to damage his credit by contrasting detached statements from his works which the writer is pleased to find contradictory; but he proves nothing to me, except his own incapability of perceiving that every square has four sides; a fact which Ruskin is one of the few men to remember always and impartially. The *Quarterly* article, rumored to be written by the wife of one of our most conspicuously-placed painters, is incomparably more able, and is, indeed, the boldest thing in the way of a gladiatorial exhibition, which I know to have "come off" in the contest against Ruskin, although a very little fairness in construction and interpretation of that critic's works would deprive the attack of four-fifths of its pungency, and nine-tenths of its argument. Ruskin, in his quiet way, retaliates by calling the *Quarterly*, in his pamphlet, "that once respectable periodical." He is now in Switzerland, where, I suppose, he will remain some months, and perhaps until the bringing-out of his fifth volume of "Modern Painters" shall require his presence in London. His Academy-pamphlets seem likely to produce a crop of imitations from less competent hands; two of this sort—of which I have seen one—have been published already.

Besides the Academy Exhibition, that of the Old Water-color Society has opened within these few weeks. It presents a most cheering contrast to the New Society's collection of which I had to express so mean an opinion last month. The great work is Mr. Lewis's "Frank Encampment in the Desert of Mount Sinai," of which you will find a close and eloquent panegyric in Ruskin's pamphlet. Mr. Alfred Fripp has several Italian subjects, full of most dainty color, light, and manipulation—pic-

tures, which a little more "back-bone" would make very excellent indeed. "David Cox" is quite as grand as ever in his hasty power and splendid gloom; and William Hunt sends a "Bit of Mont Blanc"—painted, as I hear, for Ruskin—a beautiful marvel of still-life painting. Among the landscape-painters, Messrs. Branwhite, Rosenberg, Collingwood, and Evans, also distinguish themselves particularly. Then, there is a third annual exhibition of the French school of painting—the successor to the Exhibition of last year, which became so popular by the presence of Rosa Bonheur's picture of the "Horse-fair in Paris." This is, on the whole, a less taking collection, and several of the works included in it were to be seen at the great Paris Exhibition of last year. However, there is a good deal well worth looking at. Biard has one of his extraordinary subjects of harrowing incident, based on fact—a shipwrecked crew rescued from the ice by Laplanders. The Bonheur family muster strongly. Rosa sends three works, not very elaborate, but grandly struck off; her sister Juliette two, well marked by style and careful observation; and her brother Auguste two also, which are productions of immense power, rivalling his eminent sister's. These are named "Cattle descending the Mountains," and "The Hunt-scene in the Forest of Fontainebleau;" the latter containing a cry of dogs in chase, leaping after the stag, in which the swiftness of darting motion is truly wonderful. "A Burial in the Vosges," by Gustave Brion, where the bereaved family are dragging the coffin through thick snow on a kind of sledge, is full of strange pain and actuality. The peasant-subjects of Frère, six in number, are as near perfection as they could well be, for the best qualities of *naïf* truth and sweetness. Hamon contributes some of his graceful domestic idyls; Lambinet, among other landscape-subjects, one very fine, named "Before the Rain;" Palizzi, some fine pieces, indicating a predilection for goats; and Philippe Rousseau, some rabbits equally capital. The French treatment of animals is very characteristic and masterful. Delaroche's "Napoleon Crossing the Alps;" Scheffer's "Three Marys," and one of Meissonier's curiosities of art, also adorn the collection. I have been on the look-out to ascertain what influence upon French art might result from its being brought last year into contact with English pre-Raphaelitism; and there is one picture here—the "Banks of the Ru at Orgivaux," by M. Daubigny—bearing the date 1855, in which I fancy the symptoms are to be traced. It is a nice, pleasant picture, though not carried very far in execution. In the way of semi-private exhibitions, there is a work advertised as "Leonardo da Vinci's Masterpiece—the Descent from the Cross;" a smallish picture, in which the proprietor has ingeniously discovered, or imagined, some confirmatory coincidences of initials, likenesses and dates. It is a respectable third-rate work, which I venture unhesitatingly to say is no Leonardo. Indeed, it presents as much Flemish or German peculiarity of manner as Italian—being more like the handiwork of the Italianized Fleming, Lambert Lombard—than any other man whose style I can recall. If genuineness is deficient here, it is the great characteristic of a series of

Oriental pictures and sketches which the artist, Mr. Thomas Seddon, who accompanied Mr. Holman Hunt in his recent tour, has collected together for inspection. The principal painting, the "Valley of Jehoshaphat, and part of Jerusalem," is evidently as truth-telling as a photograph, and the same quality, combined with many refinements of sound and progressive art, distinguishes the entire series. These works are open to inspection in the artist's studio. A plan which possesses various advantages over that of sending to a public exhibition (especially where the space is so limited, and the treatment generally so arbitrary, as in our Royal Academy), and one which seems not unlikely to rise in favor among us.

The picture-gallery at the Crystal Palace was to have been open by this time, according to the original intention, but the opening is now postponed to an early day in June. As far as my experience goes, the project does not obtain much support among our own artists; but large consignments are said to have arrived from France, Germany and Belgium, and I hear such an enormous total as 5000 spoken of. "A few choice works have been obtained on loans to increase the attractions of the gallery," which will consist mainly, as before intimated, of works for sale. A still larger project is that of which I have spoken, as started at Manchester, and which is now definitely announced under the title of "Exhibition of Art-treasures of the United Kingdom in 1857." A guarantee-fund of £62,000 has been established, the patronage of the Queen and Prince Albert, and the presidentship of the Earl of Ellesmere, obtained; and a hope is entertained that a permanent museum may finally result from the gathering. The building, for which plans are invited, is to cover about 15,000 square yards, and not to exceed £25,000 in cost, and a secretary is wanted at the handsome salary of £300 a year. All this looks like business, and certifies a steady intention of making the project a fact.

The twelve-days' sale of the Rogers collection has come off with flying colors: some £800 the first day, £1,000 the second, £1140 the third, £1323 the fourth, and so on; and this before the pictures had come to the hammer. The total is about £40,000. Some English paintings, beyond all others, brought enormous prices; Leslie's original picture of Sancho and the Duchess 1120 guineas; Reynolds' "Strawberry girl," merely a three-quarter length figure of a child, but a work of great fame—2100 guineas (!). Three sketch-books of Reynolds' were bought for America. The National Gallery acquired four paintings at a cost of £1632, 15; viz.: a sketch for Rubens' celebrated "Horrors of War" in the Pitti Palace £210; Rubens' "Triumph of Cæsar," after Mantegna, £1102, 10; a "Good Samaritan" by John Bassano, £241, 10; and a fragment from a fresco by Giotto in the Carmine Church at Florence, £78, 15. Every one of these is a desirable acquisition in itself, but the only one which I can consider judiciously selected, is the last, which consists of heads of Sts. Peter and John, not very remarkable perhaps for Giotto, yet fervent in expression, and, as bringing the name of Giotto into our Gallery, most valuable. Of Rubens we had already a representation disproportionate to

that of other great painters. The sketch is a masterly sketch, like scores from his hand, of a picture which is certainly not interesting, however skilful and powerful; and the Triumph of Cæsar, full as it assuredly is of life, vigor, and Rubensian, is not his own design, and is comparatively low in color. The Bassano is a singularly admirable Bassano—so much so, that but for opportunities of other purchases disregarded, one would simply accept it with thanks, content to forget that Bassano was an unintellectual workman, spite of his fine Venetian eye for color and actual life, and that our gallery was not wholly barren of him before. If I am not mistaken, the government, for a sum within that which secured these four pictures, might have bought the following seven, which, looking to the merit of the works themselves and the exigencies of our Gallery, appeared to me, when I visited the sale-room, to be, out of the entire collection, the most covetable acquisitions. 1. The Giotto which has actually been purchased. 2. A magnificent finished sketch by Tintoret, of his miracle of St. Mark—a work of whose splendor, though I had previously seen various copies of it, I certainly had no idea until I beheld this sketch. 3. A Virgin Enthroned, with saints, by Cimabue. 4. A head of an Evangelist, also, but assuredly by mistake, attributed to Cimabue in the catalogue, and which *may*, I fancy, be in reality a Massaccio. 5. One of the two (not first rates but still interesting), Angelicos—Salome dancing before Herod, and a Last Judgment. 6. Either a Coronation of the Virgin, by Lorenzo di Credi, or else a Virgin and Child, with Angels—a lovely little picture, called a Giotto in the catalogue, which it certainly is not, being more probably a Gozzoli or an Angelican work. 7. One of the Hemmlings, among which was a portrait, reputed to be his own. Of the painters enumerated in this list, Cimabue, Massaccio, Angelico, Credi, and Hemmeling, are entirely unrepresented in our Gallery.

Another painter of the earlier time, hitherto unknown there, was the Florentine, Sandro Botticelli: but now together with the Rogers pictures, a Virgin and Child by this master appears on the walls. It is a good and characteristic example, if not of the first class, exhibiting Botticelli's strong, clear color, his hard contours, and his naturalist tendency; and is a purchase altogether worthy of approval. At the time when Sir Robert Peel was all-powerful at the National Gallery, and when Caraccis, Guidos, and other learned lumber and whitened sepulchres of that sort, were "the thing," the Mantegna, Giotto, and Botticelli, now purchased, following upon the Lorenzo di San Severino, the so called Gozzoli, the Durer, the Meister Van Werdens and his colleagues of the early Teutonic schools, and the rest of such pictures which have swelled, and in many cases enriched, the gallery within the last two or three years, would have been stared at indeed. But this (thank heaven for it on the whole!) is a time for the ebb of "old-masterism," and of tide for "ancient-masterism."

There are a few items further to be noted in respect of our governmental patronage. A bill has been introduced into parliament, to authorize the sale of works belonging to the nation; the object—and a

very just one, if only justly worked—being, as I understand, to enable the authorities, on buying an entire collection, to keep only the pearls, and get rid of the hog's-wash. Opposition to the bill may, however, be expected, especially in the present state of parliamentary and public feeling as to the management of the National Gallery, and it would not surprise me if the bill were lost. A vote of £2,000, is actually down in the estimates to be presented to parliament, for the proposed British Historical Portrait Gallery, and steps are announced for holding a preliminary exhibition of such portraits. For the intended Wellington monument in St. Paul's, the enormous sum of £25,000 is "to let;" £5,000 having been voted originally, and the present proposal being to add thereto, a surplus of £20,000, remaining from the sum allowed for the Duke's public funeral. Rational men will, I think, cordially agree with the "Athenæum," that England is neither so poor in heroes nor so rich in monuments, that we can afford to lavish upon one object, an amount which would suffice richly for three or four, and not by any means poorly for a yet larger number. The British Museum has bought a valuable collection of British antiquities, amassed by Mr. Roach Smith—principally, I believe, during excavations and public improvements in the city of London; and it is contemplated to undertake, on a large artistic scale, decorations for the immense dome of the newly erected Reading-room of the museum. The Department of Science and Art has announced some changes in its plan of exhibitions and prizes for the local schools, which seem calculated further to urge to emulation, and develop the self-supporting principle which has been the watch-word of the Department since its reorganization, some years ago. Finally, government has commissioned, for £1,000 each, statues of Burke and Curran, to complete the series of twelve eminent honors of parliament which adorn St. Stephens' Hall, the vestibule to the Parliament-houses. Mr. Theed takes the first, Mr. Carew—himself, I believe, an Irishman—the second of these commissions; an assignment more appropriate, perhaps, in a national than an artistic point of view. I may add here, that English architects, Messrs. Chilton and Burges, have obtained the commission in a competition, for the building of a foreign church, that of Notre Dame de la Treille at Lille. Ruskin tells us we have no architects, and I fear it is only now that we are beginning to belie the assertion; but foreigners, at all events, do not seem to concur in it. Other English successes in foreign competitions of this kind have been recorded of late, and our architectural department was thought highly of at the Paris Exhibition of last year.

Two works which were the object of unmeasured eulogies in the studio of the artist, which were publicly inaugurated in an elaborate ceremonial, at which the Queen assisted (no small event in British eyes), but which seem eventually to have fallen short of the effect anticipated, are now in the Crystal Palace. These are the model of the monument to be erected at Scutari to our fallen soldiers, and the so-called Peace Trophy, by Baron Marochetti. The Scutari monument is a granite obelisk raised on a double pedestal, surmounted by

a gilded cross, and marked on its four sides with stamps of the English arms. But for these simple ornaments, the monument is entirely undecorated, presenting a severe aspect which, in association with its object, may be considered grand. The sculptural portion of the design consists of four colossal figures of angels, absolutely identical, one at each angle of the obelisk. Marochetti's name is one which I never mention without respect; and, but that enthusiastic accounts of the work had raised my expectations to a lofty pitch, the feeling of honor with which I beheld the figures would, perhaps, have been one of *satisfaction*. The angels stand with crossing hands, in grand, large folds of drapery, with earth-ward eyes, and shut in by the mighty sweep of wings meeting at their feet, each holding a palm branch of triumphal recompense. The faces are beautiful, but hardly so noble as I had hoped; the treatment is rightly based upon the Christian ideal; but I must say that I found the more pagan angels of victory in the Napoleon tomb at Paris, the work of Pradier, higher in their impressiveness. The Peace Trophy is, as a general design, about the most monstrous *pasticcio* of Renaissance commonplaces, flimsinesses, and abortive protuberances of forms which I remember to have been afflicted by. How such an artist as Marochetti can tolerate a baseness of this kind, passes my comprehension. The wreath-holding giant figure of Peace, however, which surmounts it, in silvered and gilded drapery, and metallic flesh-hues, is an imposing work of effect, done for effect, and, as such, equal to the purpose.

An engraving, and two art-works of the month, deserve mention. The engraving is by Mr. Lewis Gruner, after a renowned Raphael in the Duke of Marlborough's Gallery at Blenheim House, the Virgin and Child throned under a canopy, flanked by St. John the Baptist and St. Nicholas of Bari. The work had never been engraved before, except in small outline, also by Mr. Gruner; and the present plate, which measures 16 inches by 23, and is in the strictest line manner, is a skilled and sufficient record of a work which, belonging to the transition between Raphael's Perugian and Florentine styles, ranks honorably; although I can trace nothing in it such as, apart from Raphael's name, would avail to distinguish it above many other similar productions of the same period of art. Mr. Linton, one of our landscape painters of superior credit in the classical school, has published a work on "The Scenery of Greece and its Islands, illustrated with fifty views sketched from nature, executed on steel" with reasonable talent and success; and Mr. Worrum, long known in connection with the schools of design and other departments of art culture, and now secretary to our National Gallery, has issued under the title of, "Characteristics of style—an Introduction to the Study of the History of ornamental Art"—an analysis of ornament, clear and useful in its statements of fact, but infected by an unconcealed partiality for Renaissance work which can, to my apprehension, render its guidance nothing but prejudicial to the student.

WM. M. ROSSETTI.

REVELATIONS OF A PICTURE DEALER.

FLORENCE, May 18, 1856.

MESSRS. CRAYON.—It has been so long since the date of my last letter,* that I dare say you may have imagined that I had broken down, or grown indifferent in the great work which I have undertaken. You have mistaken me much, if you have for a moment entertained a thought that the coldness, with which my gem of a Raphael, and the other great works by the old masters, which I sent to America, have been received, would throw a damp on my exertions. You may rest assured that it will require something more than the indifference of any set of speculating, time-serving aldermen, and jealous, narrow-minded and selfish artists, to divert me from a course, wherein I see the consummation of such great results. I am still at work, heart and soul, in spite of all; and when I send the next collection to America, I shall be there in time to stand by it. My grand scheme of a great Gallery of the finest works of the old masters shall yet be carried out, and you shall see that I will accomplish it.

I must confess that I expected better things of you, however, as editors of a journal, professing with so much earnestness of words, to uphold the interests of art, than to have preserved such determined silence as to the merits of my collection of old masters, as you have done. You must have seen them. I am fearful, however, that I forgot one important thing, when I wrote to my correspondent in New York, to send you "a special invitation to see them as soon as they arrived"—to which was a "nota bene," that "there would be champagne and oysters on the occasion," as they are the only certain baits for New York editors; or, the cause of your silence may be, perhaps, more rightly traced to the unfortunate influence and dread of the artists to whose interests, I fear, rather than to art, your journal is sold beyond hope of redemption. I know you cannot help yourselves, and, therefore, rather pity than censure you. I know that if you dared to express your real sentiments on the subject, they would accord with mine; but I also know that, if you did, you would raise a storm about the devoted "CRAYON," which would very soon bring it to a last dying speech and confession.

I need no other evidence of the interest you take in my great enterprise, than the earnestness of your inquiries as to my future movements, an account of which, I shall give without restraint or hesitation, as well for the benefit of the world as for your own gratification. My motives for thus frankly placing the results of my experience before the public, are grounded in the most sincere desire for the promotion of art—to rescue it, if possible, from the hands of the artists, who have no other interest therein, than to secure their own selfish ends, and who should not be suffered to have anything to do with it, beyond answering the requirements of their patrons. They have no right to dictate, in any way, upon the subject.

Raphael was ordered to paint the walls of the Vatican in fresco. He did not stop to wrangle or contest points as to how, or in what way it should be done, but went

to work and did the job, in a business-like manner. That bully of an old fellow, Michael Angelo, tried to make a flare-up about the Sistine Chapel, but found it would not do, and had to knock under to the will of his patrons. Thus, has it always been with the most famous artists of old. They did the work which they were ordered to do, in less time than our modern men would take in endeavors to argue an undertaking into some patent process, by which to help or disguise their imbecility. True, they were no doubt, greatly assisted by the advice and direction of their patrons and learned critics out of the profession, who told them so plainly what to do, that the mere doing of it was a matter of nothing.

Our artists, instead of doing as they are told, without further question, have the presumption to set themselves up for judges on points which are none of their business, and, as is plainly evident, with ill-disguised cunning, endeavor, by making false issues, to palliate and conceal their deficiencies. They would be dictators in all matters of taste and propriety in art; yet, when they come to a trial of what they can do—precious little wool is there to show for all the noise.

I maintain, Messrs. Crayon, that no fellow with a palette on his thumb, or his fingers bedaubed with clay, has any right to express an opinion on the subject of art. If the one is ordered to make a figure in clay, plaster, marble, bronze, freestone, or wax—with or without knee-buckles—cocked-hats, bob or tie wig—stark naked as father Adam, or beblanketed to the eyebrows—his business is to do it. If our great national legislators were to require a statue of Washington (I can't say in what way that would not accord with the grandeur of his character, although I doubt not, some artist might suggest one), or of Gen. Jackson, smoking his pipe (which I have seen him do), it is not for any sculptor to raise impertinent questions of propriety—but, to do as he is ordered—and to be thankful for the job.

If one of our down-town men wants his portrait painted, sitting at his counting-house desk—with a view of his country seat (although it be one hundred miles off), seen through the window—and the Three Polies taking a pilot off Sandy Hook in the middle distance—whose business is it, I should like to know, but his who pays for it—and what are painters for but to do it?

The old masters never hesitated in obliging their patrons. They knew better than to attempt it; and the artists of our own day must be brought to their right senses in such matters. The great geniuses of former times were above such contemptible niceties. They boldly introduced living popes, princes, and cardinals, bouncing dames and damsels in rich brocade and ruffles, side by side with saints and prophets, and in subjects dating from the Creation down. The Dutch even exceeded the Italian masters in this commendable deference to the desires and opinions of their patrons. I have seen a picture by Rembrandt, of Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac, in which the latter is in jack-boots with spurs and some dozen pair of breeches. There is another of the "Wise men's offerings," by an artist whose name I cannot this moment recall, wherein

* See *The Crayon* of April 18, 1855. vol. 1. No. 16.

is represented a Dutch admiral in full costume, presenting, with a quarter-deck air, the model of a Dutch seventy-four, to the special charge of St. Joseph, as an "old salt" who knew how to handle it.

Our artists are far more nice than wise in such matters, and it is the business of those who pay them, to take the conceit out of them. It is also our business as well, to bring them to proper consideration and acknowledgment, as well as emulation of the old masters. Unless we, who do not belong to the craft, take the matter in hand, it will never be done; and until it is done, art must continue to languish, as it does in sickly and hopeless imbecility. There is, as I can prove by facts, a regularly organized combination among the artists to oppose the introduction of the works of the old masters among us, well knowing, as they do, the purification of taste which must be inevitably the consequence. Well may they fear to be measured against such standards. If once the public mind can be inoculated with a taste for, and can learn to appreciate the excellences of such works by the old masters, as I have sent to America, down goes the whole fabric of their hopes. If once the eyes of the American community are opened, to see through the glorious obscurity of cracks and varnishes into the very cloths and panels, to see the perfection of such works, who will be found to endure the things of modern production? We shall then see no more of heads staring at you with the impudent reality of flesh and blood—satins and silks flashing in the light with disgusting vivacity—landscapes no better than we can see out of doors any day—leaving nothing to excite the imagination or elicit argument as to what it is.

I would that I had language at command, to express the luxury of enjoyment which lies within the privileges of the sincere admirer and devoted worshipper of the old masters. Tell me not of barnacle-crusted old bottles, fished up from wrecks, or disinterred from old cellars. Bring to my lucky grasp, for a shilling, a dark and mysterious panel, the worms dropping from it, eloquent as mites from old cheese of antiquity and richness. Whether grand historical composition—holy family—or landscape—which the up or which the down of it?—who can tell? Thanks to my lucky stars—that can I. I take it home with me under my cloak (I never go out without one expressly for the purpose), in delicious excitement and trembling with anxiety. With a feeling of pity I encounter the smile of the crowd, whom I design not otherwise to notice. I answer the impertinent questions of the upstart artist-boy of yesterday with commiseration. On the way, I provide myself with a bottle of spirits of wine and another of turpentine. There is half a bale of raw-cotton at home ready, with full provision of sifted saw-dust, Indian corn meal, powdered pumice-stone—old ashes—lye—and even naphtha for desperate cases—with rags in any quantity. I lock my door, tie up the bell, and set to work.

Gloriously under my hand comes forth hidden treasure. I rub and scrub, day after day with unwearied delight, until at last, in some sly corner, comes forth, to answer to my anticipations. "Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino." "Michael Angelo Buonarroti." "Tiziano Vicellio"—or some such name—in letters sometimes rather hard

to make out, yet still clear enough to those who choose to find them, and easily to be read by any with the aid of a little judicious retouching. I can, at times, scarcely refrain from shouting with delight at my discoveries; but, there is an envious narrow-souled artist occupying the floor below, and in silent exultation I rejoice. True, I may have rubbed down in places to the very canvas or panel—but, what of that? I keep a knowing restorer in constant employment, at fifty cents a day, to bring up my old pictures to their original state of perfection, and I am safe. He is a perfect treasure to me, and can turn out a picture to any name I discover, or to which I attribute it, in a way that would be perfectly marvelous, if I did not sit by him all the time, and not only see him do it, but give proper direction to his operations. I only wish I had my Raphael here again, that he might put it through a process of perfect restoration. My whole collection, which has been sent to America, would be so much improved by an overhauling by him, that I think I shall send him over for the express purpose—or rather take him with me, for I am scarcely willing to trust even him, without my personal superintendence.

I was first impressed with the importance, if not the necessity, of such a helper by obtaining access to one of those establishments in this place, which artists have the insolence to call "manufactories of old pictures." To show how perfectly disinterested, and above all dissimulation are most of the dealers in old pictures, to be readily found throughout Italy by those who have the courage to resist the insinuations of artists and others to their disparagement, I was introduced there by the proprietor of it himself. This was done even without my asking, and with a frankness that confirms one in the opinion I have long entertained, that among old picture dealers and collectors, are now only to be found real and disinterested promoters of art. They labor not to gratify the ambitious or mercenary cravings of the living, but to rescue from obscurity the overlooked and neglected achievements of the dead. Have they not filled the world with wonder and admiration at the thousands on thousands of works, by all the great gods of art which they have supplied it with? Have they not done it gallantly—in defiance of documentary evidences and spurious catalogues of the works of each and all, which have been patched up by cliques and academies of artists and scribblers to deceive and mislead? Have they not done it under the impulse of the noblest and most generous motives? The prices at which they willingly part with the treasures they discover, answer beyond all doubt. It is a reflection which should warm our hearts towards them that, now that they have filled the whole world beside, they are coming so earnestly to the rescue of America. Not an American traveller comes to Italy, but they are on the look-out for him—and in a way that none can do who are not in downright earnest in the business. Their agents are legion, and everywhere I have known them get wind of a customer farther off even than London or Paris, and follow him up until they hoted him safely within reach, ripe and ready for their hands—with a guard of honor about him worthy of a prince, all in

perfect training, from the humblest hotel runner, to the loungers about of a higher order—droppers in just in time to turn or confirm an opinion, with irresistible ribbons in their button-holes, and crests and titles on their cards. For all this, the unsophisticated dealers have to bleed—rarely under fifty, and I have known it up to eighty per cent, on the amount of sales, but still they endure it nobly for the good cause.

I would gladly say more on the subject of the disinterestedness of picture dealers, and show you how often and mercifully they have been fleeced by their agents, and even customers, but I will defer it to another letter. My sympathies are warmly enlisted for this valuable and much injured class of men, who bear their wrongs with a patience and forbearance, which should arouse in the breast of every one, as it does in mine, a spirit of indignation towards them, among whom artists are most prominent—by whom they are shamefully vilified, and against whose intrigues they are obliged to be constantly on their guard.

On entering the great establishment of my friend, the dealer, I must confess that it was difficult to resist an unfavorable impression on my mind, to find myself in a large room with some dozen windows, at each of which was an artist (I mean a restorer), at work. An overpowering odor of varnish filled the place, mingled with that of glue, and I know not what else besides, to which it required some time to become accustomed, before I could clearly command my faculties. Immediately on my entering there was, at a signal given by my guide, a pulling of ropes and cracking of pulleys, not unlike in effect to a "mainsail haul" on ship-board. A sudden darkness enveloped everything, and it was only after a while that I could make out at each window, knowingly arranged for the purpose of the most favorable effect, a picture upon an easel, and before it a pale and, to all appearances, half-starved operator, with a table beside him, covered with mysterious looking pots and bottles of varnish, colors, brushes, scrapers, etc., etc., and on some I observed even magnifying glasses.

My conductor first brought me before a magnificent *Salvator Rosa*, which was undergoing the process of restoration. Instead of directing my attention to the face of the picture, as any one unskilled in such matters would doubtless have done, I deliberately walked to the back of it, to examine the canvas. There I was foiled, for it had been recently re-lined, and I observed a shrewd smile twinkle in the corner of the eye both of the dealer and restorer; but I knew what I was after, and how to get at it. Carefully scrutinizing the edges, I tested the vestiges of the original canvas there discernible, until I fully satisfied myself of its being one upon which *Salvator Rosa* had undoubtedly painted, and so pronounced it. The prompt and business-like manner in which I carried through my examination, and decision with which I pronounced my unqualified opinion of the originality and genuine character of the work, somewhat startled my friend. It was evidently a good deal more than he anticipated of me. "I could scarcely conceive," said he, seizing my hand with a cordial grasp, "that any but an Italian could have known so

much—certainly to none else than an American could it be possible."

I bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment to the genius of my country—never, perhaps, so spontaneously elicited. All the rest in relation to the picture was matter of secondary consideration. Although the limbs of the trees were rather strangely twisted, the foliage very queer, and the figures had uncommonly long arms and legs, and the restoration of the name of the artist in one corner was not quite completed, it was a decided *Salvator Rosa*.

I derived much satisfaction in finding that this picture was to go to one of our merchant princes, on the Fifth Avenue, who had sent out an order to a banker here for a *Salvator Rosa* of this exact size, at a price not to exceed one hundred dollars, frame included, to match a genuine *Claude*, which he had luckily purchased at an auction in New York. I freely signed a certificate as to the genuineness of the picture, which the dealer had ready made out in his pocket. So you see, Messrs. Crayon, in spite of the artists, the glorious work is going on, and the value of the old masters is beginning to be properly understood among us.

The next picture that I was invited to scrutinize was a *Raphael*, a duplicate of a "Holy Family," in the gallery at Naples. The restoration of this picture had, as my friend assured me, cost the restorer four months' incessant labor. This I promptly turned into dollars and cents, and made it to be about forty dollars—according to the rate at which restorers are paid—to say nothing of varnishes and materials, which I know to my cost, make very considerable items in the expenses of old picture restoring. Of the originality of this work there is no more question than there is of the one at Naples. My friend informed me he had made a journey to Naples, with a splinter of the panel in his pocket, to test its authenticity; and he assured me, that "the two panels had been undoubtedly cut out of the same log." "Per Bacco!" said he, "I discovered that a gash in the carpenter's plane, which is plainly identical on both, was given by a hidden nail in the panel of my picture. This, therefore, must be the first and the original, and that the duplicate." I saw the nail myself. Who but an artist could have any doubts in the presence of such evidence? And yet, to show you how little artists are capable of judging of the merits of the old masters, this picture was rescued from the hands of one of them (in exchange for an old straining-frame), who had used it to stop a broken pane in his studio window for five years, without discovering its real value.

I have great pleasure in informing you that this picture has gone to America. There was a gentleman of Boston, at the time I first saw it, then on his way to Florence, who, the dealer informed me, was determined to have a genuine "Holy Family," by *Raphael*, at any price. Of this he had been fully advised by his correspondent at Paris (whom I believe the gentleman had the good fortune to have as his courier). With the irresistible evidences of originality and genuine character of the picture before me, especially those of the nail and the plane-marks in the panel, I willingly gave a certificate in relation to this picture also, and so earnestly interested

myself, on the arrival of my countryman in Florence, to secure it to his possession, that he bought it without hesitation. I wish he had been a New Yorker; but, such a treasure should not be lost to the country, let it go where it might. We may now safely pride ourselves in the possession of two genuine *Raphaels*—mine and this.

I examined and passed opinions on various other works in process of restoration in the establishment, and at the same time kept my eyes wide open to see into everything which was going on. I discovered in less than an hour all the mysteries of relining, stopping up, patching, cleaning, retouching, varnishing, etc., etc., and hurried home to make notes and memoranda for practical application and experiment.

I immediately bought up several heaps of old pictures which I met with in the *Piazza del Duomo*, and other places, at a very cheap rate, hired a room in a quiet, out-of-the-way place, up five pair of stairs, and set to work. There, although I found myself often dogged by the police, I devoted myself to earnest experiment in old picture restoration, until I became capable of anything in the business that any man dare undertake.

Soon after the cholera broke out, and raged throughout the summer, as you no doubt know. A panic seized on every one. All who could get away fled; but I stood my ground fearlessly, for I saw an occasion for a Napoleon-like exploit before me, and I achieved it. It proved, as I anticipated, a glorious time to buy up old masters; people were willing to sell for anything. I bought right and left. My man and I were alive as grasshoppers throughout the whole season; and, as you can well imagine, we made a real harvesting of it.

I succeeded in getting possession of three *Giottos*, two *Ghirlandaios*, and of no less than five *Fra Angelicos*. Such glorious specimens, too, of this rare artist last mentioned! So full of grace and incomprehensible beauty! Angels so unlike anything seen in these degenerate days! all with their heads on one side, and their hair parted so exactly on the forehead; one foot up and one foot down, with green wings, and pink ribbons flying about them: some playing by note upon the clarinet, and some upon the fiddle. Then I have several of *Fra Bartolomeo's* best works, and *Michael Angelo's*, too. The artists pretend to say that the latter never painted in oil; but I know better, for I bought no less than six by him last summer. Don't I know his hand as well as I do that of our old firm? Superb specimens they are, too, with the legs of all the figures doubled under them, and every bone and muscle seen, not only through the skin, but drapery, too, plainly enough to be counted. As to the *Andrea del Sartos*, which I have secured, I have not yet had time to count them. The heaps of *Claudes*, *Salvator Rosas*, *Poussins*, *Orizzontes*, *Lucatellis*, *Canallettis*, *Luca Giordanos*, etc., cause me to tremble for the responsibility of their possession. *Raphaels*, *Leonardo da Vincis*, and *Correggios*, are always scarce in the market, and there were only two or three of each brought into it by the cholera, and they were seized upon by the few dealers who dared to stand their ground, before I had a chance at them. I was lucky enough to light

upon several *Titians*, *Paul Veroneses*, *Giorionis*, and others of the Venetian school, with some very choice gems by the Flemish masters, of which I may have occasion to make further mention hereafter.

It did, indeed, seem providential that I should be on the spot, and so fully prepared in every respect, to take advantage of this great occasion for the acquisition of works by the old masters. Such will never occur again. It cannot, for I have made desolate the walls of Florence.

You can now, Messrs. Crayon, well understand the reasons why I had no time to write until now, and even at present I spare it at great sacrifices to my heart-and-soul-absorbing occupations, that I may set you right in the confounded apprehensions you have entertained of my having flinched a hair's breadth from my great purposes.

I will inform you further, in my next letter, of my operations, and especially of my experience in old picture restoration. In the meanwhile, I shall probably be compelled to leave Florence; for, what with the excitement which I have raised among some of the artists, and a few of the dealers, I find that I have gathered a hornet's nest about my ears, which would make a longer sojourn here rather perilous. The government spies, too, have been lurking about my quarters in a way that makes me feel uneasy, as we have no minister or chargé here. If we had, I should stand up for my rights as an American, and show them something they little dream of.

With my best wishes for the increased success of the "CRAYON," in its new shape, as a monthly, I remain yours, as ever,

T. P*****.

Architecture.

DUNCAN & SHERMAN'S BANKING-HOUSE—THE SOCIETY LIBRARY BUILDING—ARCHITECTURE IN NEW HAVEN.

WITHIN the last two years several buildings have been planned for our Banking Institutions, embodying the long-desired, perfect fire-proof construction; and since the wrought iron beams manufactured by Cooper and Hewit, which have been used in most of these edifices and in all the buildings now erecting by the United States government, so facilitate this kind of construction, it is to be hoped that this mode of building our more important structures will soon become the rule, instead of the exception. It is much better that a building should be severely plain and built to last for ages, than that it should be gaudy without, and frail and combustible within. Too much property is destroyed by fire in our American cities. It does not follow that a building to be plain must be uninviting or unmeaning. It can be both simple and truthful, and expressive of purpose. It is because we do not think of this matter, individually, in that spirit of earnestness with which we undertake our business affairs, that our buildings are so stupid if plain, and so tawdry if expensive.

The Banking-house of Messrs. Duncan & Sherman covers an area of about forty-five by eighty feet; is five stories high, and is built of the light-colored Jersey stone; the most beautiful sandstone in the country. The exterior is elaborately treat-